

1999 Session Report



**Mark
Miloscia**

Summer 1999

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

When this historic 1999 session began, with a 49-49 tie in the House of Representatives between the two major parties, I had high expectations that lawmakers would work together for the needs of Washington families across the state.

This was my first session as your representative, and I saw this as an opportunity for both parties to work cooperatively to improve state government, making it more efficient, effective, and responsive to the needs of the people of the 30th District and the state.

The session was long and difficult, and reaching agreement was not always easy. I was disappointed that we did not complete our work in the allotted time, but required three extra days to reach agreement on a transportation budget and improvements to school safety. Nonetheless, there were accomplishments of which I'm very proud, especially the fact that the \$20.6 billion budget we passed represents the lowest level of spending growth in 20 years.

This newsletter highlights some of the successes and shortcomings of the session that just finished. If you have questions about these or other issues, please don't hesitate to contact me. I'd also like to thank all who phoned, wrote, visited or contacted me by e-mail, sharing your opinions and views on issues of importance to you. I appreciate hearing from you, and hope you'll continue to keep in touch.

Sincerely,



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Building stronger schools

Preparing our children for the future is our primary responsibility. The Legislature lived up to this challenge with raises for educators and measures that will improve our schools.



- We passed a solid bipartisan measure to assist students and schools who need help meeting our strong academic standards, while holding schools and school districts accountable for results.
- We added money for the **Reading Corps**, expanded learning assistance, and added better math training for teachers.
- We approved **raises for teachers**, knowing their salary concerns require a long-term commitment. Pay increases for teachers come to 15.4 percent for beginning teachers, 7.9 percent for mid-career teachers and 10 percent for veteran teachers. Veteran instructors who have taught for at least 16 years get an extra 2 percent increase next school year.
- We gave **classified employees**, such as secretaries and custodians, and all **state workers**, a 3 percent raise both this year and next.
- We addressed the issue of school safety by providing \$4 million for alternative programs for disruptive students, and \$3 million for intervention and prevention programs, including school security personnel or equipment.

Higher Education — the ticket to family-wage jobs

Increasingly, a college degree is the ticket to finding high-wage jobs in our new economy. To help our residents get those jobs means we must support our colleges and universities and make them more accessible to more students. We did both this session.

The capital budget, which pays for building needs, provides \$524 million for expansions of branch and satellite campuses and \$229 million to repair, build and expand community college buildings.



Making higher education accessible and affordable

Our final operating budget also makes the dream of higher education a reality for more students. The budget will pay for an additional 8,300 slots at our state's universities and community and technical colleges. In addition, we've provided \$10 million for "**Promise Scholarships**" to help high-achieving high-school students from low- and middle-income families attend college.

Protecting the Highline aquifer

Area legislators were successful in getting \$250,000 to study the effects of the gravel-fill required to build the proposed Sea Tac third runway on the Highline aquifer. Another \$250,000 will study the effects of the gravel mining on the Maury Island environment. There is a proposal to mine gravel from Maury Island, which would then be barged and trucked to the proposed runway construction site, causing concern for residents of both areas.

Unemployment tax break on hold

Despite intense efforts, we were unable to seal an agreement that would have given businesses a one-time \$500 million break in their unemployment taxes. The package also would have provided \$174 million in retraining benefits for laid-off workers. Negotiations continue, and a one-day special session in September to pass an agreement is possible.

Transportation — reducing congestion, improving safety

We passed a \$4 billion transportation plan to address the state's need to move people and goods efficiently and keep our economy growing. This new budget is designed to:

- reduce traffic congestion, pollution and gridlock by providing 1,400 highway and bridge projects worth \$1.14 billion during the next two years;
- keep people and goods moving by providing \$343 million over six years to improve strategic freight corridors;
- provide \$300 million over six years to fix potholes, improve safety at intersections and correct troublesome grade separations;
- improve passenger only ferry service, ferry terminals, and provide a new, better-designed jumbo ferry;
- make \$100 million worth of rail improvements, including an additional round-trip Talgo trip per day between Vancouver, B.C., and Seattle; and
- provide \$43 million to mitigate environmental impacts for existing highway and road projects, such as removing fish passage barriers, preserving wetlands, and handling storm runoff.

Transportation budget funds local projects

The transportation budget includes 18 separate projects for the 30th District to improve roads and bridges at a total cost of \$87.7 million on completion. Highlights of the plan include:

- HOV lanes from the Pierce County line to Tukwila
- Park & Ride in Federal Way
- A number of improvements on SR 18, to name a few — an eastbound off ramp to Weyerhaeuser Way, improvements from Weyerhaeuser Way to SR 167, and an east-bound offramp to West Valley Highway
- HOV lanes on SR 167 from King County line to 15th SW
- Port of Tacoma road grade separation

Mark's legislation

Several of the 19 bills that I prime-sponsored this session became law, and several others made significant progress in the law-making process. Here's a summary of those that passed and two that did not pass, but are of special interest.

- **Eliminating boards and commissions (SHB 1251)** — This government efficiency measure eliminates almost three dozen boards and commissions that are defunct, duplicative, or have outlived their usefulness, saving taxpayers \$148,000 during the next two years alone. Signed into law.
- **Inmate DNA testing (HB 1757)** — This public safety measure requires that all adult and juvenile violent offenders provide DNA samples to be kept on record as a deterrent to future crime and to help solve crimes on the books. Signed into law.
- **DNA privacy (HCR 4412)** — This measure calls for a joint select committee on DNA identification to review DNA use, identification, testing, data banking, technology, research, and privacy issues. Passed legislature.
- **Agency director duties (SHB 1494)** — This bill redefined the outdated job description of the director of the Department of General Administration so that the director can clearly understand his/her duties and be held accountable for achieving results. Signed into law.



Gov. Locke congratulates Rep. Miloschia after signing his government efficiency bill into law.

- **Joey Levick bill (HB 1429)** — This proposal would have required a person who knows that someone is in a life-threatening situation to summon help, even by simply calling 911. Did not pass.
- **Credit card warning stickers (HB 1566)** — I sponsored this bill for a group of students working on a civics project who thought putting warning stickers on credit cards was a good idea, especially since credit card companies target young borrowers. A radio talk show host ridiculed the bill without checking the facts or the reason for the bill, causing a number of calls to my office that were less than polite. This was not the kind of lesson I wanted these students to learn.

Local projects get funding

I sit on the Capital Budget Committee, which writes the budget that provides money for building improvements throughout the state. We were successful in providing \$413,000 in state funds for the Knutzen Family Theater in Federal Way, and \$50,000 for improvements to parking and trails for Hylebos State Park.



Join the e-mail network!

Each week during session, and about twice a month during the interim, I send an e-mail to a network of 30th District constituents, keeping them informed of what is happening with the Legislature. Send me an e-mail message asking to be put on the list is all it takes. Please include your name and address for our records. Thank you.

Boys and girls clubs to benefit

I and several other legislators were successful in securing \$1.5 million in the budget earmarked for local boys and girls clubs across the state. The Federal Way Boys and Girls Club will be eligible to apply for up to \$200,000 from the state, providing they meet certain conditions, including matching grants.

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